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ELEMENTARY MUSIC TEACHING IN THE LABORATORY SCHOOL.

I

THE general problem in the music work of the Laboratory School is how to arrive through class instruction at the child's appreciation of good music. The work proceeds on the basis that an emotional response to beautiful music may be present in the life of the unmusical as well as in that of the musical child—that is, that every individual may become intelligent musically. On the principle that the knowledge of music symbols and forms is useful to those only who have an impulse toward musical expression, the chief emphasis is not laid upon acquiring sight-reading, but rather upon the awakening and fostering of a feeling for melody and harmony. A carefully graded series of steps leading the child into a knowledge of symbols can be used with profit only where children have sufficient musical gift to be specializing in music. In this school we have made experiments to find common avenues of approach to music for the various grades of musical gift in an average class. The members of the oldest group have this year shown a discriminating taste, a quickness of apprehension, and an enthusiasm for their song work which would prove that much of the experimentation has had the desired results. Their present repertoire is composed of songs which they have chosen or accepted as desirable: "The Wanderer's Night Song" (two parts), Rubinstein; "The Lotus Flower" (two parts), Rubinstein; "Aurora Borealis" (two parts), Rheinberger; "Heidenröslein," Schubert; "Hark, Hark, the Lark," Schubert; "Who is Sylvia," Schubert; "The Wanderer's Song," Schumann; "The Hunter," Schumann; "Morning Song," Grieg. All of these songs are sung without notes, and are thus thoroughly their own. The one or two members of the group who have risen from the ranks of the "tone-deaf" and whose intonation is occasionally faulty, share the interest and may fairly be called musically intelligent.

The most difficult exercise, the ascending scale, has been introduced (in the key of *d* or *e*) by words such as—

Up in a tree Cherries I see, Some are for you, Some are for me.

Finally the *sol-fa* names have been given. The more gifted children are singing the ascending and descending scale with syllables correctly. The others, who are slower in musical expression, have at least been awakened to a recognition of eight pitches in the scale, and of the fact that these pitches are used in our songs. Thus a first step in their musical development has been taken.

A device for the six-year children, which induces tone-thinking, is to allow them to sing the ascending and descending scale, each child singing one tone. As each one in turn wishes to be *do*, the drill is prolonged without loss of interest. These children are given the antiphonal exercises in two-, three-, and four-pulse measure-rhythms for quick comprehension of intervals. They are next led to feel the difference in quality of the various incidents of the scale. The "home-tone," *do*, is the most easily recognized. After its quality is felt, the broken triads on *do* and *re* are given to the class, at first without their syllable names. Such words as "the day is bright" and "the day is dark" being given, they decide which triad best expresses each. For convenience we call *do—mi—sol* the "joyful," and *re—fa—la* the "sad" three. By drill the children are finally able to recognize these sets given in any inversion, and later revert naturally to them as points of departure in notation or sight-reading. The bugle call, *reveille*, is an interesting example of the joyful scale-incidents in various positions. The ear-training proceeds in conjunction with notation of the original songs, where inter-

vals of all sorts occur, which are to be named and written upon the staff. This work gives the pupils a facility in comprehending and expressing a musical idea; they gain what is commonly called a "quick ear." A striking instance of the facility acquired is the following: The twelve-year children were given aurally a new song which pleased them. They caught the melody immediately, learned its one verse of eight lines, and, finding the song too short, wrote a second verse nicely suited to the music, completing all in one half-hour period.

It is impracticable to deal with the obstinate cases of so-called "tone-deafness" in class instruction. The injustice to the individual and to the remainder of the class is obvious. During the winter of 1900 a special assistant undertook the individual ear-training of these children. She gave them two periods a week of five minutes each, with excellent results, reaching the following conclusions: The tone most easily produced is *g* above middle *c*. Although some children have great difficulty in singing this, yet by using the piano and keeping the tone alive so they hear it continuously for a time, they finally touch it and gradually learn to hold it. The next tone for children with naturally high voices is the *d* above, for low voices the *d* below. By grouping these tones, *g, d, g*, a trumpet call is formed, which is interesting and therefore easily produced. The trumpet call gradually becomes longer, and with the introduction of *b* more elaborate. The succession *g, a, b* presented great difficulty to these children, and *middle c* was found to be one of the last single pitches to be acquired. The descending scale was more easily acquired than the ascending. Special work along this line was carried on daily with a little girl of seven, who, in spite of flexibility of voice, was unable at first to repeat a given pitch. She had no conception of interval or melody. After three quarters' work, however, she was able to sing correctly a song of several verses, accompanying herself with pleasing harmony upon the piano.

RHYTHM.

The kindergarten child comes to the primary class with an unconscious rhythmic sense developed by the rhythm plays.

The primary class, which has not had such previous training, must be held back until a feeling for rhythm is awakened through the singing of many rhythmic songs. The first expression of rhythm is voluntary rhythmic motion suggested by the text of the song—rocking, pattering, drumming, etc. Not until this rhythmic sense is expressed can rhythm be profitably analyzed. We have used the swinging of the measure rhythm (given by Mr. Calvin B. Cady) as more suggestive of the continuity of melody than the disconnected beat. The process of analysis is as follows: The children are given a familiar song with strongly marked two-pulse rhythm. They are asked to imitate the teacher by keeping time to the movement through swinging the right hand. Each swing is called a pulsation or pulse. They are led to notice that one pulse is stronger than the other. The strong pulse is called accented. On each accented pulse they are to give a larger swing of the hand. After accomplishing unison swinging, the teacher shows them how to show, by connected circles drawn on the board, the rhythm of the melody. This process is repeated with three, four, and six-pulse rhythm, the children drawing the swings in exact rhythm with the music sung or played. In taking up the rhythm of a new song the teacher makes the class familiar with the melody by repetition, and then asks individuals to express on the board their idea of its rhythm. After this is done, the teacher sings the song according to the various drawings, and the class decides in which the accented pulses are shown correctly.

It has been found that the drill on rhythm may be profitably continued throughout the second school year. Later references to the subject come in the natural course of the music study. The complete familiarity with rhythm which this training gives does away with the subsequent beating of time while learning songs. The mental grasp of rhythmic progression guides the singing. When later the children express their musical ideas in song, they use their sense of rhythm as they do their sense of melody, experimenting with the various measure-rhythms to find which will best express the idea to be conveyed. For instance, the children of seven years of age completed a song, after con-

centrated work upon it for several periods, and sang it to the school. Such public performance of a song is usually felt to be as final as if it were put into print, but several of the boys felt so sure that after all their song would have been more effective in another rhythm that they induced the rest of the group to reconsider the matter. The rhythm was finally changed from three- to four-pulse, to the decided improvement of the song.

SIGHT-READING OR NOTATION.

Sight-reading or notation is commenced toward the end of the second school year. Since notation admits of more activity upon the part of the child than does sight-reading, we begin on that side. If a child can think a tone and place it correctly on the staff, he can conversely, when he sees the note on the staff, think the tone and utter it. Thus notation is a drill for sight-reading. Having become familiar through the ear-training work with the diatonic scale and the broken triads *do-mi-sol*, *re-fa-la* in all positions, the children are ready for a preparation for notation. They are given the facts concerning the *G* clef, the staff, and the names of the lines and spaces. The latter are memorized through writing of words on the staff by means of notes—as face, egg, bad, cage, cabbage, baggage, etc.—the teacher giving these to the children, and later the children to each other. This device has been found to retain its interest until a thorough drill has been accomplished. By experiment they find that if low *do* falls on *e*, high *do* falls also on *e*, etc.; and the idea of the octave is established. Actual notation begins here. A child makes a *G* clef, and by means of simple marks on the staff writes the scale which the group sings. The teacher erases first one and then two or more of these marks, and the children sing what are left (tone-thinking). To make a melody of what they are singing, rhythm is necessary, and they are led to see the use of rhythmic incidents—notes. To fix the idea of various values, one child writes the scale on the staff with whole notes, and the group sings it, giving the full value to each note. The next is asked to make these notes a little shorter, “so we need not sing so slowly;” the next, to shorten them still more: and so on until we sing the scale with sixteenth notes. Here the time signature

is easily introduced through their grasp of the rhythm idea. Knowing that the accented pulse begins the measure, they formulate the rule for placing the bar. Now they are in possession of the required tools for melody-writing and -reading. By dictation each child in turn writes on the staff one of the familiar broken triads so given as to form a melody. The reading of this presents no difficulty, and while they sing, the teacher adds a rhythm-harmonic background. This first success in reading a melody is a surprise and pleasure to the child which tides him over the next step to be taken—the reading at sight of new intervals. These are added gradually until he is taking at dictation any ordinary phrase. An interesting problem for the child is to take a short melody and, leaving the bars in position, to change the rhythm, using the various time incidents as required; or, by changing the position of the bars, find still other time problems. He is led to discover through his rhythmic sense that the melody he arranges must fill either four or eight measures. The object of encouraging the child to handle these symbols himself is to enable him to get a more vivid impression of them than he could by reading from a printed page. At nine years of age the children find this work an interesting game. One little girl frequently came early to school in order to “do queer things with time” by herself on the blackboard staff. The same method is followed in presenting the dotted note, rests, etc., although, as the notation of original songs begins at this time, many of the new problems are introduced in a more vital way by the requirements of the song. The children now have music copy-books in which they notate their original group songs as soon as completed. The songs are first written on the blackboard staff, each member of the group in turn doing a given amount of the notation. The process of notation is as follows: The teacher, having written the words of the song under the staff, plays a phrase from it upon the piano and calls for *do*. This having been correctly sung, the first child comes to the piano and locates this *do* to ascertain the key. He then plays the scale to find how many and what black notes are necessary for the signature. (Later through drill he memorizes

the various key signatures, for the purpose of shortening this slow process.) The clef and key-signature being correct, the next child finds the rhythm by swinging and places the time-signature. Next, by reference to the words, the strong pulse is located and a bar placed before each. The pitches are designated by simple marks on the lines and spaces. When these are all correctly placed, each child takes a measure and adds stems, dots, rests, or whatever is needed to complete the notation. When the song is correctly notated upon the board, each child copies it into his copy-book, where for the sake of compactness the words have been written by the teacher.

The problem of presenting the model scale and the various key-signatures in a vivid and interesting manner has not been worked out. The children have acquired a knowledge of these by the usual memorizing. At ten years they show a certain interest in acquiring facts, however, so the chief part of the memorizing is done at this time.

In taking up two-part sight-reading the teacher has put upon the board two-part exercises in various keys, allowing one half of the group in turn to sing each part, that no premature limitation of voices to the alto shall occur.

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[*To be continued.*]